

Appl. No. : 10/780,486
Filed : February 17, 2004

REMARKS

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed on November 5, 2004. Applicants' representative would like to initially thank Examiner Jeanty for the courtesy he extended during the telephone interview conducted on December 22, 2004.

I. Substance of Telephone Interview

Claims 1 and 11 were discussed during the interview and were compared to de Hond (U.S. Patent No. 5,796.395). Applicants' representative articulated his belief that certain limitations recited in these claims, such as the phrase "a search module that provides functionality for users to search the database for contacts of their respective contacts" in Claim 1, are not disclosed or suggested by de Hond. The Examiner suggested revising Claim 1 to replace the language "a first user may submit a search request" with more definite language. No exhibits were discussed.

II. Summary of the Amendments

By the foregoing amendments, Applicants have amended Claim 1 as suggested by the Examiner. In addition, Applicants have amended Claim 2, and have added new dependent Claims 34-37. No new matter has been added.

III. Art-Based Rejection

As discussed during the telephone interview, Applicants believe that the art-based rejections of the claims are improper because, among other reasons, the applied references do not disclose or suggest all of the limitations of the independent claims.

With respect to Claim 1, for example, the applied references (namely de Hond and the prior art description in the present application) do not disclose or suggest "a search module that provides functionality for users to search the database for contacts of their respective contacts," and do not disclose or suggest a search module that "is responsive to performance of a search by a first user by using said relationship data to identify other users that are contacts of contacts of the first user." With respect to Claim 11, the applied references do not disclose or suggest "receiving, from a first user of said plurality of users, a search request to search for contacts of contacts of the first user," and "in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user."

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Applicants also respectfully disagree with the Examiner's assertion that the prior art description contained in the present application discloses all of the limitations recited in the first two subparagraphs of Claim 1.

Because the applied references do not disclose or suggest all of the limitations of independent Claims 1 and 11, the art-based rejections of Claims 1-8 and 10-21 are improper and should be withdrawn.

The dependent claims recite additional patentable distinctions over the applied references, and are therefore patentable on their own merit. As one example, dependent Claim 2 states that the relationship data "specifies permission levels granted by each respective user for allowing specific contacts of the respective user to view information from the personal data record of the respective user." Applicants' prior art description, de Hond, and Herz (U.S. Patent No. 5,835,087) do not individually or collectively disclose or suggest this feature.

Applicants also respectfully submit that the rejection of dependent Claims 2-6, 12-15, 17, 18 and 21 is improper because the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation in the prior art to combine Herz with either de Hond or Applicants' prior art description.

IV. Information Disclosure Statement

The Office Action papers received by Applicants do not reveal whether the Examiner considered the references listed on page 2 of the FORM PTO-1449 filed with the application. Applicants request that these references be considered if they have not already. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney of record if he needs copies of any of these references.

V. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants request that the Examiner withdraw the art-based rejection and issue a Notice of Allowance.

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If any issues remain which can potentially be resolved by telephone, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney of record at his direct dial number of 949-721-2950.

Respectfully submitted,

KNOBBE, MARTENS, OLSON & BEAR, LLP

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By: Ronald J. Schoenbaum
Ronald J. Schoenbaum
Registration No. 38,297
Attorney of Record
Customer No. 20,995
(949) 721-2950